

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER  
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DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

October 21, 1968

Area Code 415  
321-1200

Mr. Morton Mintz  
The Washington Post  
Washington, D. C. 20005

Dear Mr. Mintz:

In a certain sense you are nit-picking, since I believe I made it perfectly clear what the main point of my article concerned. However, I will stand by the side remarks that you question.

1. "Safety in preventing pregnancy". The difference in our two points of view is that I regard it important that a contraceptive work, and you seem to be quite indifferent to that consideration. From the point of view of preventing an unwanted birth, and, in the particular context of this article, the possibility of a chromosome anomaly, the issue of preventing pregnancy is clearly one of safety. I believe my language was quite explicit on this point.

2. Both intentionally and not, as you ought well to know, water is used as a spermicide. From the point of view of potential hazard to the sperm nucleus, I would argue, but only on very theoretical grounds, that water might be considerably more injurious than sulphuric acid. My concern is that water might still leave an injured sperm viable and capable of fertilization.

However, it is obvious I still have not made my main point clear. In this area as in many others, there are many commonplace practices that deserve the same level of statistical scrutiny as we all agree must be applied to drugs.

I am solidly behind the substance of your efforts to insist on this kind of scrutiny, but I must admit that I find your style in doing it at least as irritating as you find mine.

Sincerely yours,

*Joshua Lederberg*  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

*\* I am not discounting safety to the woman. Realize this is very much on your mind, and I*

LT. J. P. KENNEDY, JR. LABORATORIES FOR MOLECULAR MEDICINE, DEDICATED TO RESEARCH IN MENTAL RETARDATION  
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY      HEREDITY      NEUROBIOLOGY      DEVELOPMENTAL MEDICINE

*certainly don't dismiss it, but it just seems to be the subject here!*

MINTZ